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## RUSSIA IN THE FAR EAST.

A STATEMENT TO THE "NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW" BY COMTE CASSINI, THE RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR.

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I HAVE been invited by the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW to make a statement of Russia's position in the Far Eastern conflict. Contributing articles to magazines and newspapers is not the mission of a diplomat, and I have been obliged to decline many kind invitations from the periodical press. For several reasons I have made an exception in favor of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, the principal one being that I have from time to time given to the American press, upon application, certain facts regarding my country and its policies which, in my faith in the fairness and impartiality of the American people, I felt would be carefully considered by them in attempting to reach an honest and a just conclusion as to the true position of Russia in the Far East. In furnishing this statement to the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, I am actuated by the hope that it will be alike for the benefit of Russia and the readers of the magazine.

A common belief is that war comes only when diplomacy fails. As a general proposition this idea is correct; but it must be remembered that there are instances on record where diplomacy has been invoked for the specific purpose of precipitating war. Russia's diplomacy has ever made for her peace and that of the world. It was in this spirit that she entered into negotiations with Japan last summer, in the fervent hope that an understanding satisfactory and honorable to all concerned might be the result. Russia believed that Japan's diplomacy was directed to the same end. She saw her mistake only when Japan, without fair warning, substituted arms for diplomacy. It was then that my country realized that her patience in the negotiations had been abused, and that Japan was using diplomacy as a time-

gaining device that she might the better equip herself for the war upon which she appears all along to have been determined.

When I was in Paris last summer a prominent Japanese remarked to me:

"Before we meet again our countries probably will be at war."

"Why do you say that?" I asked. "Russia's desire has always been for peace, and the war would not be of her making."

"Certainly not," he replied. "It would be what my country has so long been hoping for and expecting. She needs a war to place her in the front rank of nations; and while your diplomacy may stave off hostilities a little while longer, Japan will get a war with you before a year has gone."

I hoped my Japanese friend was wrong; my government hoped so; and yet even then there were many evidences that he spoke the truth. The correctness of his statement was not fully appreciated, however, until the treacherous midnight attack at Port Arthur by Japanese torpedo-boats, while the Japanese Minister at Petersburg was still enjoying the protection and the courtesies of the Russian government, to whom he had only a short while before expressed the confident hope that war might yet be averted.

Russia has never ceased to wonder why the idea that she was willing and anxious to make war with Japan became so generally prevalent in the United States. Prejudiced minds, or those having nothing beyond a superficial knowledge of my government's position preceding the unexpected and dishonorable attack upon our fleet at Port Arthur, may dispute the statement that Russia hoped for and tried to maintain peace, but I have no hesitation in making it. If proof of the assertion be demanded, it lies in the simple but uncontradicted answer, Russia was not prepared. For the personal representative of the Russian Emperor to make an admission seemingly so humiliating to national pride may appear strange and remarkable to the people of the United States, but it is made with full appreciation of its importance and significance. I repeat that Russia was not prepared for war because she had no reason to expect war. In her faith that the negotiations with Japan were being conducted by both parties with the object of reaching an amicable and an honorable adjustment of their differences, she was not conscious that the outcome was to be other than peaceful. Faithfully adhering to the terms of her treaty with China respecting Manchuria, she had with-

drawn the major portion of her troops from that province until between sixty thousand and seventy thousand only remained. Such a proceeding makes ridiculous the allegation that Russia, actuated by designs upon not only Manchuria, but Corea, was from the first determined to possess this territory by force of arms, and that negotiations were prolonged for the purpose of giving opportunity for the concentration of the Russian forces upon Manchurian soil. Had Russia desired war, or even had she expected it, no considerations would have induced her to evacuate Chinese territory and thus lose the opportunity of ending the war quickly.

It should not be supposed that Russia is at war for the purpose of gratifying the ambition of her opponent to become a great nation. Russia is fighting to defend her position in the Far East; for vast interests which it would be foolhardy for her to abandon. That Russia, foremost in developing Manchuria, holds a privileged position in that vast expanse of territory, will not be denied by fair-minded men. It is a popular impression that Russia has attained her present foothold in this Chinese province through the right of virtual military conquest. No idea could be more erroneous. Through the pacific channels of diplomacy my government acquired privileges which, accepted in good faith, have been exercised in a spirit of true modern progressiveness, until now the flower of enlightened civilization blooms throughout a land that a few years ago was a wild, and in many parts a desolate, seemingly unproductive waste. Before the signing of the treaty which I had the honor to negotiate in behalf of my sovereign, giving to Russia railroad and other concessions in Manchuria, no white man could have ventured into that province without danger to his life. China, of her own free volition, conferred upon Russia permission to build a railway through Manchuria to Port Arthur, and it was to Russia that China turned when, forced to assent to Japan's demand for one hundred million dollars as war indemnity, she found herself unable to meet this enormous obligation imposed upon a defeated country, bankrupt, or practically so, by the exactions of a costly war. China's appeal was not in vain; she received the loan from Russia. I claim it to have been another friendly act on the part of my government, in cooperation with France and Germany, to save to China the Liaotung peninsula which Japan had seized as

part of the spoils of victory. How much more serious even than it is to-day would have been the menace to Europe and to the whole world, if Japan had secured a firm foothold upon the Asiatic mainland.

Upon the basis of the rights to commercial exploitation thus peaceably obtained, Russia built a railway into and through Manchuria. She built bridges, roads and canals. She has built cities whose rapid construction and wonderful strides in population and industry have no parallel, certainly in Europe and Asia, perhaps even in America. Harbin and Dalny are monuments to Russian progressiveness and civilization. These great undertakings, wonderful even in a day of marvellous human accomplishment, have cost Russia more than three hundred million dollars. To have abandoned them in the face of the menacing attitude of an ambitious and daring nation would have been an act of stupendous folly that would have made Russia not only the laughing-stock, but the object of the scornful pity, of the whole civilized world. Had the menace not existed, however; had China not failed to offer satisfactory guarantees of adequate protection to Russia's interests in Manchuria, Russia would cheerfully have continued to carry out her arrangement with China for the withdrawal of the Imperial military forces from Chinese territory.

It may properly be asked, and doubtless is asked: Why was a Russian army sent to Manchuria at all? The answer involves only a simple explanation. Initial successes achieved by the Boxers in the anti-foreign uprising of 1900 emboldened them to cross the Amur River, which divides Russian territory from Manchuria, and attack the Siberian city of Blagovistchensk. There were regular Chinese troops in this attacking force, commanded by officers of the Chinese Imperial service. That fact gave Russia cause for war. It was an act of war. But Russia, with a forbearance that contradicts the charges against her of a desire to dismember the territorial integrity of the Chinese Empire, took no such advantage of the situation. Her military forces in Siberia vigorously resented the invasion and punished the invaders, and then, in accordance with that high law of self-preservation, crossed the frontier to protect the vast Russian material interests in Manchuria from the destructive designs of the fanatical hordes of soldiers and Boxers whose rallying cry was, "Death to all foreigners."

Had not Russian troops gone into Manchuria, that province would doubtless have witnessed scenes of carnage, pillage, and wanton destruction that would have created a sensation throughout the world. Russia restored order in Manchuria. She held her military forces there pending an adjustment of the differences between China and the Powers. When inquiries were made as to Russia's intentions toward Manchuria, assurances were promptly and cheerfully given of her willingness to evacuate as soon as China had furnished guarantees absolutely necessary to the preservation of Russia's vast interests.

In accordance with her expressed purpose, Russia negotiated an arrangement with China which provided among other things for the evacuation of Manchuria by the Imperial troops, and more than half of these troops had been withdrawn when the failure of China to furnish the required guarantees produced a halt. In failing to complete her evacuation of Manchuria on October 8 last, Russia is charged with the violation of her agreement with China. It requires but a reading of every Russian note on the subject to prove the injustice of this charge. Russia in all her diplomatic exchanges, written and verbal, on this subject, has qualified this pledge with the condition: "if action of other Powers proves no obstacle thereto."

Jealous of the growing interests of Russia in Manchuria, the Japanese government long ago endeavored to establish a parallel between its position in Corea and that of Russia in the Chinese province. The justice of this contention my government has never for a moment admitted. To consent to the establishment of such parallel would be to surrender a principle which the Powers, Japan included, have repeatedly recognized, and the same Powers have stood or claimed to have stood for the absolute integrity of the Corean Empire and for its independence. Having promised protection to the interests of foreign Powers in Manchuria, Russia refused to enter into a bargain with Japan by which that country might secure certain rights that in themselves would affect the political and territorial integrity of Corea.

In the progress of the negotiations begun last summer between Petersburg and Tokyo, Russia showed at all times a most conciliatory spirit. She modified her terms time and again, so intent was His Majesty, the Emperor, upon preserving the peace of the Empire. At all times, however, my government insisted upon a

mutual and unconditional guaranty of this principle of the independence and integrity of Corea; on an undertaking to use no part of Corea for strategic purposes, as the authorization of such action on the part of any foreign Power was directly opposed to the principle of the independence of Corea, and finally on the preservation of the full freedom of navigation of the Straits of Corea.

The Japanese government declined to accept these conditions, and replied by demanding again that Russia incorporate in a separate treaty between the Petersburg and Tokyo governments a declaration defining anew the rights which Japan was to enjoy in Manchuria, and a reiteration of the statements of my government's future intentions in that province. First, because such a subject was quite irrelevant to the negotiations in progress, and for the additional reason that Manchuria was a question to be settled between Russia and China in which Japan was no more legitimately concerned than any other Power, my government refused to accede to these demands. To have entered into a separate arrangement with Japan regarding Manchuria would not only have been a violation of good faith with China, but with the Powers which, with Russia and Japan, signed the peace protocol of 1900. However, in another effort to bring the negotiations to a peaceful conclusion, my country did all that dignity would permit and offered to give assurances again that the sovereignty of the Emperor of China in Manchuria would be recognized. Such a declaration had already been addressed to the Powers. Having made this marked concession solely in the interest of peace, my government awaited the Japanese answer in the expectation that it would at least be diplomatic in character, and would furnish the basis for the furtherance of the negotiations to a satisfactory conclusion. Before the Russian Minister at Tokyo could deliver this reply, the Japanese answer came, not through the regular channels, but as a torpedo attack at midnight. And now that war has come, Russia does not doubt the issue.

It is not a thoughtless statement that were Japan to obtain supreme control in Manchuria, the dominant military spirit of the Japanese would lead them to organize the Chinese into a modern army of such proportions that Europe and America would stand aghast at this menace to their peace and well-being. That is a

phase of what has been called the "Yellow Peril" that it would be well for the thoughtful and intelligent classes to consider carefully. The Chinese make good soldiers. To suppose them to be pusillanimous in character is erroneous. They are easily trained by competent instructors, and with a population of more than four hundred and thirty millions to draw from, an army could be raised that, cooperating with Japan, might, with a reasonable show of confidence, defy the civilized world.

You in America should pause to contemplate the result of a union of the two great Mongol races—one progressive, aggressive, alert, over-ambitious, dreaming dreams of standing dominant not only in the Far East, but in the councils of the Powers; the other imitative, easily influenced, ready if not anxious to have a stronger hand mould its flaccid character into whatever shape would be best suited to carry out a scheme of national aggrandizement. You of America, as well as we of Europe, have this to confront. It is not Russia alone that the danger threatens, but the whole family of Caucasian nations.

There is another aspect of the question which has doubtless already appealed to that admirable, rugged common sense for which the American business man is noted the world over. I refer to the commercial feature of the Far Eastern situation. In the outcropping of that perhaps natural sympathy arising from a kindly feeling for what has been considered a weak nation in its conflict with a powerful antagonist, many well-meaning people in this country have not taken time to contemplate the future. Every man looks to his own interests, and nations and the people composing them are the same in that respect. I know that in Europe there is a disposition to credit America with the worship of the Mighty Dollar above all else, but my experience in this great land, many of whose distinguished citizens have given me a friendship that I deeply appreciate, has taught me that money is not everything, and that the hearts of men and women are full of those Christian qualities that place honor and fair play higher than mere sordidness. Believing that the American people, however much their judgment may have been warped at times by misconception of the truth, will see that there are two sides to the present unfortunate conflict in Asia, I do not doubt that they will ultimately reach the conclusion that Russian progress is not only not inimical to their interests, but distinctly helpful to them.



Let us consider the issue in the Far East from the practical standpoint, and see to what extent it bears on the sentimental. It is claimed that with Russia out of Manchuria, that great province would be a lucrative market for American textile goods, agricultural implements and notions. But would there be no competition in this trade? Immediately the rivalry of Japan suggests itself. There are no people so quick to learn as the Japanese. They are intelligent, deft, wonderfully imitative. With the opportunity of commercial success in Manchuria presented, how quickly they would appreciate the value of learning the art of making the goods demanded by the countless inhabitants of that territory. Cheap grades of cotton fabrics are necessary to the Manchurians; Japan would not be long in learning to fashion them. Manchuria, given up to tilling the soil, requires agricultural implements; the Japanese would quickly be turning out ploughs and harrows, reapers and scythes. With their cheaper labor and their nearness to Manchuria, no other people could compete with the Japanese.

But let us suppose for argument's sake that Russia, triumphant in this war, finds herself dominant in Manchuria. Japan, her enemy, could look for no favors; she could not expect to find encouragement for the importation of her manufactures. But Manchuria would require many things that Russia could not supply, or supply at figures reasonable enough to create a market. In Russia, agriculture is, comparatively speaking, more important than manufacturing, and those goods which are made in my country are not such as Manchuria would need. Russia, too, would be obliged to use the railway with its high freight tariffs. Contrast Russia's position commercially toward Manchuria with that of the United States. In this country are made not only the very materials that would find a ready sale among the people of the province, but with American goods shipped by an all-water route, the cost of transportation would be much lower than the cost of carrying on the all-land routes to which Russia would be confined. Should Russia ship by water to Manchuria from Odessa, the distance would still be too great to make competition with the United States successful. From Moscow to Port Arthur the distance by rail is 5,000 miles. It is therefore easy to realize the privileged position of the United States in competing over an all-water route from the Pacific Coast, with Russia over an all-rail route.

What then, taking these matters into consideration, is the Far Eastern question viewed in its commercial aspect from the American point of view? On the other hand stands Manchuria open to the commerce of the world—Japan in competition with the United States, a manufacturing Japan capable of making the goods needed in Manchuria and of making them cheaper than America can make them, and having the additional advantage of short all-water freight rates. On the other hand stands Manchuria under Russian control with a friendly hand extended to the United States, and Japan given no encouragement. To my mind, the conclusion is obvious. What better evidence of Russian friendship could America have than such an opening, or, to merge the practical with the sentimental, what better results could follow for both America and Russia than mutual cooperation in the stimulation of American trade with Manchuria?

WASHINGTON, *April 9, 1904.*